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AMENDMENTS IN THE CLAIMS:

Claim 1. (currently amended) A method of providing a content, characterized in that:

when a content is transmitted to a user, an electronic watermark for preventing execution of said content is embedded in said content and at least information associated with the user, to whom said content is to be transmitted, is added to said content; ~~[[and]]~~

when said content is executed, said information associated with the user who has received said content is checked at ~~both a transmitting and receiving ends, end;~~

when said content is executed, said information associated with the user is checked at a receiving end; and

the execution of said content is allowed by removal of said electronic watermark if and only if the result of ~~[[the]]~~ both checking steps indicates that said content is an authorized content.

Claim 2. (previously presented) A content providing server, characterized in that;

when a content is transmitted to a user, said content providing server embeds an electronic watermark for preventing execution of said content in said content and adds at least information associated with the user to whom said content is to be transmitted to said content; and

when said content is executed, said content providing server checks said information associated with the user to whom said content has been transmitted, and gives to the user permission to execute said content by removal of said electronic watermark if and only if the result of the checking indicates that said content is an authorized content.

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Claim 3. (previously presented) A client terminal for use in a content providing infrastructure, characterized in that;

said client terminal stores a content in which an embedded electronic watermark for preventing execution of said content is embedded and to which at least information associated with a user is added; and

when said content is executed, said content is executed by removal of said electronic watermark in accordance with information which allows said content to be executed and which is supplied from a content supplying server if and only if said information associated with the user to whom said content has been provided indicates that said content is an authorized content.

Claim 4. (previously presented) A content providing system comprising:

a content provider including a content server which stores plural kinds of digital contents and also including in which information associated with a user is registered;

at least one user terminal; and

a network for connecting said at least one user terminal to said content provider, wherein:

said content provider includes a user database for registering, in advance, information associated with a user received from said at least one user terminal;

when said content provider receives from a user terminal a request for providing a particular content, said content provider requests said user terminal to resend the information associated with said user and transmits the requested content combined with said information associated with said user after checking that said information associated with said user is consistent with the information registered in said user database;

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when the content transmitted from said content provider is executed at said user terminal, said user terminal checks whether the information associated with said user included in the content is consistent with the information stored in the user terminal; and

in accordance with the result of the checking performed at said user terminal, said content provider determines whether to transmit a content execution permission command to said user terminal;

wherein said content provider further includes encryption means for encrypting the information associated with a user and embedding an electronic watermark in said content for preventing execution of said content, and, when said content provider receives from a user terminal a request for providing a particular content, said content provider transmits the requested content after combining the requested content with the information associated with said user and with the electronic watermark; and

wherein said content execution permission command transmitted from said content provider serves to remove said electronic watermark for allowing execution of said content.

Claim 5. (previously presented) A content providing system comprising:

a content provider including a content server which stores plural kinds of digital contents and also including a user database in which information associated with a user is registered;

at least one user terminal;

a network for connecting said at least one user terminal to said content provider, wherein

said content provider includes a user database for registering, in advance, information associated with a user received from said at least one user terminal;

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when said content provider receives from a user terminal a request for providing a particular content, said content provider requests said user terminal to resend the information associated with said user and transmits the requested content combined with said information associated with said user after checking that said information associated with said user is consistent with the information registered in said user database; and

when said content provided by said content provided is executed, said content provider requests said user terminal to resend the information associated with said user, checks whether the information associated with said user resent from said user terminal is consistent with the information registered in said user database, and then determines, in accordance with the result of the checking, whether to transmit a content execution permission command to said user terminal;

wherein said content provider further includes encryption means for encrypting the information associated with a user and embedding an electronic watermark in said content for preventing execution of said content, and, when said content provider receives from a user terminal a request for providing a particular content, said content provider transmits the requested content after combining the requested content with the information associated with said user and with the electronic watermark; and

wherein said content execution permission command transmitted from said content provider serves to remove said electronic watermark for allowing execution of said content.

Claim 6. (original) A content providing system according to one of Claims 4 and 5, wherein said information associated with the user includes at least a user name, a password, and a device ID uniquely assigned to a device of said user.

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Claim 7. (original) A content providing system according to one of Claims 4 and 5, wherein:

when the information associated with a user received from a user terminal is registered, in advance, in the user database of said content provider, said content provider transmits to said user a card on which a card ID is stored; and

said information associated with the user includes at least a user name, a password, a device ID uniquely assigned to a device of said user, and said card ID.

Claim 8. (canceled)

Claim 9. (previously presented) A content provider connected to at least one user terminal via a network, said content provider comprising:

a content server which stores plural kinds of digital contents; and

a user database for registering, in advance, information associated with a user received from said at least one user terminal, wherein:

when said content provider receives from a user terminal a request for providing a particular content, said content provider requests said user terminal to resend the information associated with said user and transmits the requested content combined with said information associated with said user after checking that said information associated with said user is consistent with the information registered in said user database; and

when the content transmitted from said content provider is executed, checking is performed as to whether the information associated with said user included in said content is consistent with the information stored in the user terminal, and said content provider determines,

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in accordance with the result of the checking, whether to transmit a content execution permission command to said user terminal;

wherein:said content provider further includes encryption means for encrypting the information associated with a user and embedding an electronic watermark in said content for preventing execution of said content, and, when said content provider receives from a user terminal a request for providing a particular content, said content provider transmits the requested content after combining the requested content with the information associated with said user and with the electronic watermark; and

wherein said content execution permission command transmitted from said content provider serves to remove said electronic watermark for allowing execution of said content.

Claim. 10 (previously presented) A content provider connected to at least one user terminal via a network, said content provider comprising:

a content server which stores plural kinds of digital contents; and

a user database for registering, in advance, information associated with a user received from said at least one user terminal, wherein:

when said content provider receives from a user terminal a request for providing a particular content, said content provider requests said user terminal to resend the information associated with said user and transmits the requested content combined with said information associated with said user after checking that said information associated with said user is consistent with the information registered in said user database; and

when said content transmitted from said content provider is executed, said content provider requests said user terminal to resend the information associated with said user, checks

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whether the information associated with said user resent from said user terminal is consistent with the information registered in said user database, and then determines, in accordance with the result of the checking, whether to transmit a content execution permission command to said user terminal;

wherein:said content provider further includes encryption means for encrypting the information associated with a user and embedding an electronic watermark in said content for preventing execution of said content, and, when said content provider receives from a user terminal a request for providing a particular content, said content provider transmits the requested content after combining the requested content with the information associated with said user and with the electronic watermark; and

wherein said content execution permission command transmitted from said content provider serves to remove said electronic watermark for allowing execution of said content.

Claim 11. (original) A content providing system according to one of Claims 9 and 10, wherein said information associated with the user includes at least a user name, a password, and a device ID uniquely assigned to a device of said user.

Claim 12. (original) A content providing system according to one of Claims 9 and 10, wherein:

when the information associated with a user received from a user terminal is registered, in advance, in the user database of said content provider, said content provider transmits to said user a card on which a card ID is stored; and

said information associated with the user includes at least a user name, a password, a device ID uniquely assigned to a device of said user, and said card ID.

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Claim 13. (canceled)

Claim 14. (previously presented) A content providing method for use in a content providing system comprising a content provider including a content server which stores plural kinds of digital contents, at least one user terminal, and a network for connecting said at least one user terminal to said content provider, said content providing method comprising:

a step of registering, in advance, information associated with a user received from at least one user terminal in a user database of said content provider;

a step in which when said content provider receives from a user terminal a request for providing a particular content, said content provider requests said user terminal to resend the information associated with said user and transmits the requested content combined with said information associated with said user after checking that said information associated with said user is consistent with the information registered in said user database;

a step in which when the content transmitted from said content provider is executed at said user terminal, said user terminal checks whether the information associated with said user included in the content is consistent with the information stored in the user terminal; and

a step in which, in accordance with the result of the checking performed at said user terminal, said content provider determines whether to transmit a content execution permission command to said user terminal, said content execution permission command including key information for removing an embedded electronic watermark from the content, said embedded electronic watermark operating to prevent execution of the content.

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Claim 15. (previously presented) A content providing method for use in a content providing system comprising a content provider including a content server which stores plural kinds of digital contents, at least one user terminal, and a network for connecting said at least one user terminal to said content provider, said content providing method comprising:

a step of registering, in advance, information associated with a user received from said at least one user terminal in a user database of said content provider;

a step in which when said content provider receives from a user terminal a request for providing a particular content, said content provider requests said user terminal to resend the information associated with said user and transmits the requested content combined with said information associated with said user after checking that said information associated with said user is consistent with the information registered in said user database; and

a step in which when said content transmitted from said content provider is executed, said content provider requests said user terminal to resend the information associated with said user and transmits a content execution permission command to said user terminal after checking that the information associated with said user resent from said user terminal is consistent with the information registered in said user database, said content execution permission command including key information for removing an embedded electronic watermark from said content, said embedded electronic watermark operating to prevent execution of the content.

Claim 16. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein when the result of the checking at the transmitting and receiving ends indicates that said content is an authorized content, key information for removal of said electronic watermark is transmitted to the user.

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Claim 17. (previously presented) The method of claim 16, wherein the key information represents a data location of said content at which the electronic watermark is embedded.

Claim 18. (previously presented) The method of claim 16, further comprising the step of deleting the key information by the user after removal of the electronic watermark.

Claim 19. (previously presented) The content providing system of claim 4, wherein said content execution permission command transmitted from said content provider includes key information representing a data location of the content at which the electronic watermark is embedded.

Claim 20. (previously presented) The content providing method of claim 14, wherein the key information represents a data location of the content at which the electronic watermark is embedded.

Claim 21. (previously presented) The content providing method of claim 14, further comprising a step in which said user terminal deletes the key information after removing the electronic watermark.

Claim 22. (previously presented) The method of claim 16, wherein the key information for removal of said electronic watermark is transmitted to the user when:

first, said information associated with the user who has received said content is checked at the receiving end;

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second, a result of the check is communicated by the receiving end to the transmitting end; and

third, the transmitting end checks said information associated with the user.